

Anti-gay advocate at Focus resigning

By DAVE PHILIPPS
THE GAZETTE

The manager of Focus on the Family's Homosexuality and Gender Department has decided he needs to focus more on his own family.

John Paulk, 40, a self-described former gay prostitute who for 17 years has spread the message that homosexuality is "preventable and treatable," is resigning from Focus on the Family. He said his "Love Won Out" conventions and books have interfered with being a dad to his three sons.

"I get death threats, my kids get death threats. At Focus, I have to have a parking spot close to the door for safety," Paulk said Monday, adding, "I want to give a normal life to my sons and my ministry, and my job won't let me do that."

Paulk, who has worked for Focus since 1998, travels the country with a team of speakers instructing audiences on how to overcome homosexuality, "combat misinformation in the public school system, change public opinion and much more," according to the Focus Web site.

He said his audiences have grown by 25 percent in the past year, but the crowds of protestors decrying him have grown, too.

Almost all of Paulk's seminars are picketed by gay rights groups, and Paulk is escorted in and out of the building by police and Focus's armed guards.

Paulk said the constant threats are stressful, but his main motivation for leaving is to try something new.

"I've been working on this my whole adult life," said Paulk, who renounced his gay lifestyle in 1987.

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JOHN PAULK -
Focus on the Family

"I feel like I've given everything that I have been called on to give."

He said he has specific career plans but declined to share them. He plans to move to the Pacific Northwest to be closer to his extended family.

Paulk's work at Focus was marked by triumphs and embarrassments.

His face landed on national TV and the pages of Newsweek in the late 1990s when he first told his story of giving up homosexuality—with the help of God, he said, and his wife, a self-described former lesbian.

In 2000 that face was recognized and photographed by patrons in a gay bar in Washington, D.C., in a scandal Paulk said was "foolish and unwise."

Paulk said his resignation is unrelated to that incident.

"You don't wait three years to leave after something like that. If I had quietly tucked my tail and left in the night, that would be one thing.

"But I stayed, and we got more speaking requests than ever."

Paulk said James Dobson, president and founder of Focus, asked him to stay.

Paulk will lead a convention Monday in Detroit, and then turn over that program to Mike Haley, who will succeed him. Haley helped Paulk create the seminars and has been a key speaker since their inception.

TIMELINE

1962 Born in Springfield, Ill., realized he was gay at an early age

1981 Went to first gay bar

1982 Became male prostitute

1987 Renounced homosexuality and joined Exodus International, a Christian organization

1992 Married Anne Paulk, a former lesbian

1995 Named to Exodus International Board of Directors

1996 First of three sons born

1998 "Not Afraid to Change" - Paulk's story of how he converted published

1998 Made director of Focus on the Family's Homosexuality and Gender Department, began holding conferences to tell people homosexuality is "preventable and treatable"

1999 "Love Won Out," a book about Paulk and his wife's experiences published

2000 Photographed in gay bar in Washington, D.C.

2000 Dismissed from Exodus International, reinstated after five months

2002 Continued to lead "Love Won Out" seminars around the country under increasing protest from gay-rights groups

2003 Announced his resignation from Focus on the Family

SOURCES: "Love Won Out," John Paulk's book and Focus on the Family Web site

ees, one address

made to pay the streetlight fees when they have vacancies and decide not to shut off the meters right away.

Utilities' chief customer officer Kelly Means said all the utility's billing is done on a per-meter basis, and this policy is keeping in line with it. He also said the utility has no way of knowing when there are vacancies at properties.

Several City Council members complained Monday the utility did not say billing will be done this way when the council approved the fee in

January.

"I don't think that's what anybody on the council who supported this expected," Councilwoman Margaret Radford said. "If I have to bring it up again, I will. It doesn't sound fair on the face of it."

The fee, which is \$4.86 a month for businesses, was created to pay for installation and upkeep of city streetlights. Charged to all utility customers within city limits, it was viewed by some as an unauthorized tax and became an issue in the municipal election.

Even people who hadn't complained began grouching recently when they saw two or three of the charges on utility bills.

Sam and Glorine Orr wrote former Councilwoman Sallie Clark to say they are paying three times for lights from their duplex home. One charge comes on the electric bill serving both sides of the duplex; the others are fees on the water bills for each sides of the duplex, which are separate-

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TO BECOME FIREFIGHTERS

